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ABSTRACT

In 1991, a study was conducted to assess the relative effects of verbal mediation (VM), feedback monitoring (FM), and instructional alignment (AL) on community college learners studying earth science topics. The study sought to investigate the proportion of test score variance explained by VM and FM and to compare this variance to the amount of test score variance explained by differing levels of instructional alignment (i.e., the extent to which stimulus conditions matched among three instructional components: intended outcomes, instructional processes, and instructional assessment). Twenty-two subjects were randomly selected from 760 students who were enrolled in introductory geology and geography classes at a community college. Each subject participated in five- or six-member peer groups, acting as both a peer tutor and a peer group member. Posttreatment multiple choice tests were administered to generate achievement raw scores. On each test, half of the items were misaligned with the content of the lesson. Thus, the difference between these scores represented the "alignment effect." Results indicated that alignment had the greatest overall effect on achievement and overshadowed the lesser effects of verbal mediation and feedback monitoring. However, findings suggested that college-age peer groups offer a functional alternative to the traditional science lecture class, and can produce achievement gains equivalent to those of standard instruction, in addition to offering supplementary benefits such as incidental learning and social interactions among peers. A literature review is included, along with forms, data sheets, procedure rules, and learning packets. (Author/JMC)

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